

REMARKS

Reconsideration of the above-identified application in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

A. Status of the Claims and Explanation of Amendments

Claims 1-9 are pending. Claims 1, 4, and 7-9 stand rejected. Claims 2, 3, 5, and 6 are objected to. By this amendment, claims 2 and 5 are rewritten in independent form. Claims 7, 8 and 9 are amended to change the dependencies. Claims 1 and 4 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter has been introduced by these amendments.

B. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 3, 5, and 6. These claims were, however, objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. [11/19/07 Office Action at p. 5].

In response, claims 2 and 5 have been rewritten in independent form as shown above.

C. 35 U.S.C. § 102 Rejections

Claims 1, 4 and 7-9 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,751,354 to Suzuki et al. (“Suzuki”).

As indicated above, claims 1 and 4 have been cancelled thereby rendering the rejections directed to these claims moot.

Also, claim 7 is amended to depend from allowable claim 2, and claims 8-9 are each amended to depend from allowable claim 5.

Accordingly, all of the remaining claims (i.e., 2, 3 and 5-9) are believed in condition for allowance over the cited reference (i.e., Suzuki).

Applicant believes that the application as amended containing only allowable claims is in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicant has chosen in the interest of expediting prosecution of this patent application to distinguish the cited documents from the pending claims as set forth above. However, these statements should not be regarded in any way as admissions that the cited documents are, in fact, prior art.

CONCLUSION

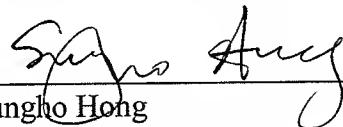
For the above-stated reasons, this application is respectfully asserted to be in condition for allowance. An early and favorable examination on the merits is requested. In the event that a telephone conference would facilitate the examination of this application in any way, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the number provided.

THE COMMISSIONER IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO CHARGE ANY ADDITIONAL FEES WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED FOR THE TIMELY CONSIDERATION OF THIS AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 AND 1.17, OR CREDIT ANY OVERPAYMENT TO DEPOSIT ACCOUNT NO. 13-4500, ORDER NO. 1232-5106.

Respectfully submitted,
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